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JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Activities of the Joint Inspection Unit of relevance to UNIDO

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

Provides a list of reports prepared by the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) during the second half of 1994 and 1995, as well as a summary of those reports of relevance to UNIDO and reflects the position of the Organization on those matters. Subjects covered are: the advancement of women through and in the programmes of the United Nations system: what happens after the Fourth World Conference on Women?; United Nations system support for science and technology in Asia and the Pacific; management in the United Nations: work in progress; travel in the United Nations: issues of efficiency and cost savings.

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Introduction

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) is, according to its statute, which was accepted by UNIDO in Board decision IDB.1/Dec.22, a subsidiary organ of the legislative bodies of the organizations that accept its statute. The statute foresees that reports of JIU shall be submitted with the comments of the executive heads of the organizations concerned to the competent organs of those organizations. Moreover, the executive heads of organizations concerned are responsible for the expeditious implementation of recommendations made in the reports.

2. Document A/49/34 and A/50/34 containing the most recent reports of JIU to the General Assembly and the reports of JIU are available at the Secretariat for consultation.

I. REPORTS SUBMITTED BY THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT OF DIRECT INTEREST TO UNIDO

3. Since the issuance of the most recent document to the Board on the subject (IDB.14/12), the following reports of JIU have been prepared and circulated for consideration, comments and/or follow-up action:

(a) Inspection of the application of United Nations recruitment, placement and promotion policies (JIU/REP/95/1);

(b) Accountability, management improvement, and oversight in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/95/2);*

(c) A review of telecommunications and related information technologies in the United Nations system (JIU/REP/95/3);

(d) Sharing responsibilities in peace-keeping: the United Nations and regional organizations (JIU/REP/95/4);

(e) The advancement of women through and in the programmes of the United Nations system: what happens after the Fourth World Conference on Women? (JIU/REP/95/5);*

(f) Investigation of the relationship between humanitarian assistance and peace-keeping operations (JIU/REP/95/6);

(g) United Nations system support for science and technology in Asia and the Pacific (JIU/REP/95/7);*

(h) Management in the United Nations: work in progress (JIU/REP/95/8);*

(i) The involvement of the United Nations system in providing and coordinating humanitarian assistance (JIU/REP/95/9);

(j) Travel in the United Nations: issues of efficiency and cost savings (JIU/REP/95/10);*

(k) Military component of United Nations peace-keeping operations (JIU/REP/95/11);

(l) Evaluation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF). Towards a more operational approach? (JIU/REP/95/12);*

(m) Strengthening of the United Nations system capacity for conflict prevention (JIU/REP/95/13).

The advancement of women through and in the programmes of the United Nations system: What happens after the Fourth World Conference on Women? (JIU/REP/95/5)

4. The report examines the slow progress made after 50 years of policy pronouncements and 20 years of action programmes in women's advancement, and focuses, in particular, on better future management of the system's substantive programmes for women's advancement in the United Nations system. The report attempts to identify specific top priority issues that could lead to results-oriented programmes and an accelerated pace of progress after the Beijing Conference. Particular attention is also paid to the focal point mechanisms of the United Nations for women's programmes.

5. In an extensive list of recommendations addressed variously to executive heads of organizations of the United Nations system, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General (JIU/REP/95/5, pp. vi-x), the Inspector recommends, among others, that the following action be taken by executive heads:

(a) Identification and implementation of a sound action programme and report to governing bodies thereon;

(b) Adaptation of existing gender training material to enable provision of such training to staff;

(c) Assessment of organization staffing and funds to determine their adequacy;

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* Indicates a report of direct relevance to UNIDO.

Note: (b) and (l) will be reported to the Board at a future session.

(d) Search for new areas for programme breakthroughs;

(e) Expansion of interaction with non-governmental organizations (NGOs);

(f) Encouragement by governing bodies of action to further the advancement of women through programmes of the respective organization.

6. The Inspector notes that many organizations lack coherent programmes to change organizational cultures and establish management responsibility, accountability and commitment to improve the status of women. Recommendations also include giving greater attention to the concerns of General Service staff and other neglected groups of women, to establishing policies to combat sexual harassment, formulating policies related to work/family issues, ensuring that women's status gains are not penalized in any "downsizing", and encouraging governing bodies' active leadership and participation to improve the status of women.

7. UNIDO shares the views of the Inspector that the present programmes for the advancement of women of the United Nations system suffer the lack of a holistic perspective and a lack of clear focus and effective monitoring functions. UNIDO participates in the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Women and supports the idea of institutionalizing this unique mechanism. Its statute and mandate should be reviewed to serve as a focal point for inter-agency cooperation, both at the policy and operational levels.

8. The UNIDO management development programme, started in 1988, incorporates awareness-building of cultural diversity and gender issues, including the problem of sexual harassment. The UNIDO policy for equal treatment of men and women and the prevention of sexual harassment is dealt with in Personnel Services information circular UNIDO/DA/PS/INF.1248. Programmes and action taken in relation to work/family issues are addressed in the context of the UNIDO Staff Rules and Regulations. These steps seek to address the interest expressed in women's issues by the policy-making organs of UNIDO.

United Nations system support for science and technology in Asia and the Pacific (JIU/REP/95/7)

9. The Inspectors found that most of the projects evaluated by them had achieved the developmental objectives set out and contributed to fostering self-reliance in science and technology for socio-economic and industrial development in the region. Major success factors include: (a) strong support by host Governments to ensure a favourable policy and institutional setting, and (b) active participation of various constituents of the production system in project operations. The Inspectors stated that technical cooperation in the United Nations system can have a developmental impact where the target community is actively involved and the policy and institutional environment is favourable, and that the Asian experience can offer valuable lessons for other developing regions.

10. However, the Inspectors caution that organizations must still devise more effective interregional strategies and/or mechanisms for channelling that experience to countries in Western Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean along expanded South-South linkages. Effectiveness in diffusing technological information to socio-economic users in the developing countries is far from demonstrated.

11. Among their recommendations, the Inspectors agreed that: (a) organizations should publish achievements in development cooperation; (b) organizations should take additional measures for strengthening regional cooperation in science and technology, especially for least developed countries (LDCs), the Pacific Islands, and countries in transition; (c) all organizations should make more systematic use of the science and technology experience, institutions, projects and other appropriate facilities in the Asia and Pacific region as entry points for expanded cooperation in other developing regions. In keeping with this recommendation, each organization should include a specific provision for interregional cooperation in its technical cooperation budget.

12. UNIDO recognizes the importance of publicizing achievements in development cooperation. In the 1994-1995 biennium, UNIDO distributed a number of publications including "Impact of reform" (GC.6/30/Add.1), the "UNIDO services handbook" (PI/118/Rev.1), and "Projects with impact"--a series of success stories that covers science and technology innovations such as BINAS (a biosafety information network established to assist Member States in developing regulation in biotechnology), and "Science for industry" (a project assisting India to develop innovative techniques in catalyst design). UNIDO continues to publicize its services and successes to offer valuable insights and lessons on development cooperation.

13. While none of the ten projects evaluated by the Inspector was implemented by UNIDO, there have been a number of technology-related projects implemented by UNIDO in the Asia and Pacific region. UNIDO was instrumental in the area of biotechnology, resulting in the creation of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), with one component located in India. Through ICGEB/UNIDO programmes, over 100 senior scientists and researchers have been trained in advanced sciences and technology.

In addition, a regional node for the BINAS network was established at Bangkok.

14. UNIDO has already taken the initiative to use information technology in creating visible information services in developing areas. In the 1994-1995 biennium, UNIDO greatly advanced accessibility to science and technology information, as well as to investment information systems, through the use of information technology such as the Internet. Electronic mail and the Internet have been integrated with the internal operations of UNIDO and processes are under way to establish links in the field. An example of UNIDO activity related to the Internet includes the World Investment Network Service programme (WINS), which is part of the UNIDO Investment Service that provides technical cooperation and pre-investment activities to developing countries and economies in transition. Information on UNIDO programmes and services as well as the level of public awareness of UNIDO information services is always accessible and is regularly updated.

Management in the United Nations: Work in progress (JIU/REP/95/8)

15. The report discusses efforts to strengthen and improve the management of the United Nations and states that various attempts in the past half century that were not well implemented have unfortunately resulted in a heavy bureaucratic web, detracting from the full effectiveness of the United Nations. In December 1993, the General Assembly insisted that the United Nations establish a new accountability and responsibility system by January 1995 and, in response, the Secretary-General has introduced a number of measures.

16. The Inspector specifies four areas that are vital to supporting a strong performance of the United Nations in the future: (a) accountability for accountability; (b) clear responsibility for programme delivery; (c) secretariat management reform; and (d) intergovernmental body oversight and leadership. With regard to (a), the Inspector recommends a focal point be established in the Secretariat to coordinate all strategic and managerial reform activities. For (b), the Inspector recommends the introduction of an effective medium-term planning, programme budget, work plans, monitoring and evaluation and performance appraisal system. For (c), the Inspector recommends that managers must have managerial competencies, "performance culture" must prevail and that delegation and decentralization should be accelerated. In addition, the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly might consider measures to improve the management and performance reporting of the Secretariat by making it more understandable, timely, action-oriented and focused. With regard to (d), the Inspector recommends that the Fifth Committee systematically reassess its workflow and focus clearly on major management and oversight issues.

17. UNIDO has, under its ongoing reform efforts, addressed all these areas inasmuch as they apply to UNIDO, as described in the document on impact of reform (GC.6/30/Add.1). As for accountability for accountability, the Office of the Director-General has been acting as the focal point to coordinate all reform activities and to oversee the management of change. With the new monitoring systems, the strengthening of Internal Audit, improved performance appraisal procedures, the institution of the Management Control and Coordination Meeting (MCCM) (UNIDO/DGB(M).3) it is clear that the so-called "accountability for accountability" mechanism has been strengthened. As for the system of management responsibility and accountability, UNIDO has made great strides in the last two years. It has clarified its mission and programme objectives, ensured greater linkage between work plans and reporting, established new managers for the priority programmes and initiated MCCMs while the Reform Steering Group continues to meet. With these measures, responsibility and accountability for programme delivery has clearly been strengthened.

18. The JIU report (paras. 17-57) lists progress made within the United Nations Secretariat. UNIDO efforts are as follows:

(a) Management information and reporting: Significant advancements have been made in the quality, usefulness and clarity of reports presented to the Director-General;

(b) Performance appraisal: UNIDO has dramatically changed the performance appraisal system, ensuring that appraisals are done for staff at all levels, based on job descriptions. Under this new procedure, rating inflation will be controlled.

(c) Strategic planning: UNIDO was one of the first organizations within the United Nations system to set up such an office in 1989;

(d) Financial management of resources: UNIDO has cut expenses dramatically, allowing the Organization to survive a major reduction in funding through the more efficient and effective use of resources;

(e) Process improvement: UNIDO has improved the various processes that allow the Organization to function more speedily and effectively. Major processes in personnel, project management and finance have been redesigned, thus cutting steps and increasing efficiency, while boosting accountability and moving responsibility further down the ladder;

(f) Increased focus on our clients: This has been considered an important aspect of management reform. Through improved dialogue with its clients and higher-quality public information, UNIDO has sought to increase awareness and support for the programmes of the Organization, thereby allowing continued operations. A direct client feedback system has been introduced to ensure that UNIDO "listens" to its clients;

(g) Downsizing: The United Nations system is increasingly the subject of cuts in funding, and UNIDO has responded to this challenge. The Organization has ensured that management at all levels has a say in downsizing, to ensure that decisions match priorities. In the redeployment of resources, focus has been placed on maintaining substantive capacity and cutting overhead expenditures.

19. Following a review of the JIU report, it is clear that UNIDO reforms have exceeded the recommendations of JIU, as well as the management reform efforts of the United Nations Secretariat, by a considerable margin.

Travel in the United Nations: Issues of efficiency and cost savings (JIU/REP/95/10)

20. This report, which is the eighth in the series of reports on travel in the United Nations system prepared by JIU, aims at finding the most efficient and economic use of human and financial resources as well as modern and effective management practices. The Inspectors reviewed the present travel system and found that the United Nations lacks data on how much it is actually spending on travel. Since travel is the fourth largest type of expenditure, the improvement and rationalization of the travel system is a very relevant issue.

21. The Inspectors point out that during the last one and a half decades, travel—especially in the airline industry—has undergone substantial changes, providing a larger variety of air fares and conditions. More recently, the prevailing world economic situation forced airlines into strong competition for the decreasing number of passengers, resulting in a multitude of prices and options that lead to new cost-cutting possibilities.

22. The Inspectors issued recommendations covering: (a) travel policy—its establishment and execution; (b) a transparent, comprehensive and updated set of travel rules and procedures; (c) control of travel through programme-budgeting and oversight; (d) cost-cutting of travel overheads through modified procedures and new technology; (e) relationships with travel service providers; (f) telecommunication and teleconferencing as alternatives to some travel; (g) options for rationalizing and/or improving various components relating to air fares, classes of air travel, stopovers, other means of transportation; (h) travel expenses other than those related to transportation, such as daily subsistence allowance, hotel accommodation, terminal expenses, free services and benefits including frequent-flyer programmes; and (i) United Nations system-wide coordination in the area of travel.

23. Since 1990, UNIDO has already been implementing measures recommended by the Inspectors to achieve more economy and effectiveness in the use of travel resources. The first measure covered the implementation of the lump-sum option for home leave travel by which the lump-sum percentage was reduced to 75 per cent of travel entitlements, thereby achieving some $200,000 of savings annually. In late 1995, a new travel information system was completed that allows processing travel authorizations through an electronic system. The system facilitates the planning and coordination of travel as well as reporting on results achieved. This new system ensures transparency in travel management. Furthermore, a Director-General's bulletin was issued in which policies, principles and procedures of official travel were set out. The new process rationalizes procedures and reduces time considerably.

24. UNIDO also entered into a new contract with a travel agency after a competitive bidding process, leading to savings and improvement in services. The introduction of new telephone and e-mail (linked to many parts of the world) systems offers a potential to reduce travel costs and, at the same time, to improve communication. Finally, to ensure oversight of travel, the Internal Audit Service has started random spot checks of all travels.

II. ACTION REQUIRED OF THE BOARD

25. In compliance with the provisions of the statute of JIU and resolution 48/221 (see para. 1 above) of the General Assembly that foresee that recommendations made by JIU should be considered and approved by Member States prior to their implementation by organizations and agencies, the Board may wish to review the recommendations of JIU together with the UNIDO views thereon and provide policy guidance for follow-up action.